

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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R 231240Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8121

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0670

STADIS////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, MA, US

SUBJECT: GDRM REQUEST FOR PL-480 RICE

REF: (A) STATE 093138, (B) TANANARIVE 0626

1. CHARGE INFORMED RAJAONAH, MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT, APRIL 22 THAT WE ARE NOT IN POSITION TO PROVIDE PL-480 TITLE I ASSISTANCE AT THIS TIME. RAJAONAH EXPRESSED MILD DISAPPOINTMENT AND THEN ASKED IF USG WOULD CONSIDER TITLE II ARRANGEMENT. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD SOON PROVIDE INFORMATION ON EXTENT OF DROUGHT LOSSES IN ORDER TO SUPPLEMENT GDRM REQUEST. WE AGREED TO INFORM WASHINGTON OF HIS NEW REQUEST.

2. ALTHOUGH WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOME FORM OF USG ASSISTANCE TO GDRM RE ITS RICE NEEDS, THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS THAT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND:

A. VARIOUS SOURCES HAVE INDICATED THAT DROUGHT IS RELATIVELY SERIOUS IN SOME REGIONS, BUT SITUATION COULD NOT BE DESCRIBED AS "DISASTER" (REF B). AT OUR MEETING, RAJAONAH SAID THAT GDRM AGENCY SINPA WHICH CONTROLS RICE DISTRIBUTION WOULD REDISTRIBUTE AVAILABLE RICE TO ENSURE THAT NO REGION SUFFERS FAMINE.

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B. GDRM FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES ARE NOW IN RELATIVELY

GOOD SHAPE. PURCHASE OF 50,000 TONS OF IMPORTED RICE WOULD BE SERIOUS DRAIN, BUT IT WOULD NOT BRING ABOUT ECONOMIC COLLAPSE.

C. GDRM IS LOOKING FOR RICE THAT IT CAN RESELL ON LOCAL MARKET IN LINE WITH ITS NORMAL PRACTICE. PRESUMABLY, TITLE II FOODSTUFFS WOULD NOT BE SUPPLIED IF RESALE IS INVOLVED AND GDRM WOULD MOST LIKELY RESIST SUCH A LIMITATION.

D. SUPPLIES WE MIGHT PROVIDE UNDER TITLE II WOULD PROBABLY NOT APPROACH MAGNITUDE OF GDRM REQUEST. IT THEREFORE MIGHT BE PREFERABLE TO GO NO FURTHER ON THIS REQUEST RATHER THAN BE CRITICIZED FOR PALTRY AMOUNT OFFERED.

E. REF (A) DOES NOT INDICATE IF RICE WOULD BE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE II. UNDP DEPUTY DIRECTOR HERE, WHO IS FORMER USAID OFFICER, BELIEVES THAT LITTLE OR NO RICE IS PROBABLY AVAILABLE FROM US STOCKS. IF THIS IS CASE, TITLE II AGREEMENT WOULD PRESUMABLY CENTER AROUND OTHER COMMODITIES SUCH AS WHEAT AND CORN. RAJAONAH TOLD US THAT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO SUBSTITUTE WHEAT OR CORN FOR RICE IN THIS COUNTRY WHERE RICE IS THE BASIC STAPLE WHILE WHEAT AND CORN ARE CONSUMED IN VERY SMALL QUANTITIES.

3. IN LIGHT OF DEPT'S VIEWS PARA 1 REF (A), WE WONDER IF RESOLUTION OF NASA BASE QUESTION ALONE WOULD PAVE WAY FOR CONSIDERATION OF TITLE I PROGRAM. IF SO, SHOULD WE NOT MAKE THIS POINT CLEAR TO GDRM?

4. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT'S REACTION TO FOREGOING, INCLUDING CONFIRMATION THAT VARIOUS ASSUMPTIONS WE HAVE MADE ARE CORRECT.SHEINBAUM

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